

commission of inquiry to investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law by Russian forces.

We must confront the suffering of the Chechen people. As many of my colleagues know, the recent Russian assault on the Chechen capital of Grozny was one more campaign in a continuing series of Russian military offensives in Chechnya. In September, I expressed my concerns to Yeltsin and Putin about the humanitarian tragedy that was, for the second time, unfolding in Chechnya. It is hard to imagine that after the use of force in Chechnya from 1994 to 1996, which left over 80,000 civilians dead, the Russian leadership could again see the use of force as enhancing the prospects for a durable settlement to this conflict. But the Russian leadership has again chosen use of force, and the current tragedy before us has now reached unimaginable heights, as evidenced by the piece today in the *Washington Post*.

Russian forces have used indiscriminate and disproportionate force in their bombings of civilian targets. This has resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilian and displaced countless other. Russian authorities maintain a virtual ban on access to Chechen civilians by media and international humanitarian agencies resulting in our having to rely on the personal testimony of refugees fleeing the fighting to determine the nature and extent of the crisis and best means to provide humanitarian relief.

These testimonies are horrific: incidents of widespread looting, summary executions, detentions, denial of civilians safe passage from the fighting, torture, and rape.

Many civilians report being detained at the Chechen border as they tried to flee the fighting. They tell of brothers and fathers who had simply been denied safe passage out. It is fundamentally unacceptable to deny any civilian the right to flee the fighting—to trap them in this dangerous war. And where do these trapped civilians go? Into detention camps. No one needs to be reminded of the systematic torture that took place in detention camps set up to detain Chechens in the 1994–96 Chechen war. That event stains the memory of the Chechen people and it is happening again.

One twenty-one-year-old tells of the horror in the camps:

About fifteen or twenty soldiers were standing in two lines with rubber sticks. . . . When I was running through the corridor, each soldier beat me with the sticks. They made us undress and started checking our clothes. They took away the clothes they liked. . . . For a week, I had to sit in the jail almost naked.

In addition to this torture, young men report that in order to be released from the camps their family members must pay outrageous bribes to camp officers and upon release, must sign papers saying they suffered no harm in captivity.

Then there are the numerous reports of rape. In one Chechen town a six-

month pregnant 23-year-old woman was raped and murdered. Her mother-in-law was executed in this same incident. And Mr. President, many incidences of rape and sexual abuse go unreported. For many women in towns and villages all over Chechnya the shame is simply too great—they won't come forward to report these horrible crimes. Chechnya's culture and national traditions make it difficult to document case of rape and sexual abuse—unmarried women who are raped are unlikely to be able to get married, and married women who are raped are likely to be divorced by their husbands. The effects of these rapes on Chechen society will be profound and long lasting. I remind the Russian leadership that rape is war crime.

Two weeks ago I sent a letter to acting President Putin expressing my deep concern over the deteriorating situation in Chechnya and the Russian government's response to the humanitarian tragedy there. I urge the Russian government to move quickly to resolve this situation in a manner consistent with Russia's obligations to the international community and urge the Russian leadership to begin now to investigate and prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses in Chechnya—it promised to do this after the last Chechen war but failed to do so.

I urge my colleagues to communicate their own concerns to the Administration and the Russian government in whatever manner you think best. We cannot remain silent. We must fully condemn the use of indiscriminate force against the civilians in Chechnya and denial of humanitarian relief to Chechen civilians. We must remind the Russian leadership that the world is watching.

This congress and this administration must express to the Russian government that it should devote every effort to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Chechnya, allow into Chechnya an international monitoring force to monitor and report on the situations there.

That is what this resolution I have submitted to the Senate, on which I hope we will have a vote, calls for. We must call for allowing international humanitarian agencies immediate, full, and unimpeded access to Chechen civilians in order to provide humanitarian relief.

This resolution, on which I hope we will have an up-or-down vote or it will be unanimously accepted by the Senate, calls for several things. It calls for the Russian Federation to devote every effort to a peaceful resolution, to allow into Chechnya an international monitoring mission to monitor and report on the situation, and to allow international humanitarian agencies immediate and full access to Chechen civilians. The people of Chechnya deserve no less.

I have no illusions. I do not think adopting a resolution automatically

turns the situation around, but I do believe the Senate should not be silent, that we must support this resolution, and we must send this message. We must stand up for human rights.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

MEASURES PLACED ON CALENDAR—S. 2081 AND H.R. 6

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for their second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the first bill.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2081) entitled Religious Liberty Protection Act of 2000.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I object to further proceedings on this bill at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the rule, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

The clerk will read the title of the second bill.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the marriage penalty by providing for adjustments to the standard deduction, 15-percent rate bracket, and earned income credit and to repeal the reduction of the refundable tax credits.

Mr. WARNER. I object to further proceedings on this bill at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the rule, the bill will now be placed on the calendar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. WARNER, Mr. HUTCHINSON, and Mr. CLELAND pertaining to the introduction of S. 2087 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

MIGRANT WORKERS

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, every time we have a recess and there is an occasion to go home, invariably we all learn something of significance that helps us in our service in the Senate. I thought I would take to the floor of the Senate today and speak about something I learned, something I experienced which I wanted to highlight. Right now, it is an issue that is sort of a low light in this body.

Earlier in this Congress, Senator BOB GRAHAM of Florida and I introduced a bill to fix our H-2A guest worker program that affects agriculture. Preceding that, Senators GRAHAM and WYDEN and I met with the Secretary of Labor and pleaded for the administration to come forward with some sort of fix to relieve the pressure on the farm labor system. There are enough workers, but you have to settle for an illegal system to conclude that there are enough workers. The Secretary assured

us that something would be forthcoming, but nothing has been.

In the meantime, I have gone forward with this fix of our farm guest worker program in the hopes of getting something through in this Congress that could win the support of the administration and begin to relieve a problem I have now seen in a very human way.

I had scheduled two meetings last Thursday, one in Woodburn, OR, and the other in Gresham, OR. The subject was farm labor. I invited people to come and talk about my bill. I was overwhelmed by what occurred. We met first in an armory in Woodburn. When I arrived, it was already filled to capacity. There were 1,200 people, most of them illegal, in the armory waiting for me to come. They had been there, I was told, for an hour or more ahead of time, hoping to get a seat to hear what was going to be shared. There were so many people in the armory, they had to put a speaker on the outside grounds so that those who could not get in could hear. Some in the media estimated there were 2,000 people in total.

I looked into their faces and saw those who live in our society, those who live in the shadows of our society, those who fill jobs in our society, those who keep our shelves full at home and in our grocery stores, but those who are victimized in the most inhumane way because we have an unworkable law.

I heard all kinds of opinions about my bill. I granted to them that it probably wasn't a perfect bill, but at least I was trying—one of the few who are—to resolve this situation. I thank Senator GRAHAM of Florida for his willingness to step into this issue. One gets lots of arrows in the back when they try to tackle an immigration issue.

What motivates me to do this is almost weekly reports of migrant workers dying in the American deserts of the Southwest, trying to make their way to jobs. These are people who are victimized by human coyotes. They are raped. They are robbed. They are bribed. They are pillaged in ways that are unthinkable, and ought to be unthinkable, in this country. It happens because they have no safe and legal way to come here and to go home, to work a job, to earn their way, and to share the American dream, which is really just a human dream. That was the motive upon which I tackled this issue.

The law we have regarding our guest worker system doesn't work. There are estimates of 2 million illegal aliens in this country working in agriculture. There are estimates of 6 million illegal aliens in the United States. I was trying to focus on agriculture. Let me tell you why this system doesn't work.

First of all, it is economically beyond the pale of most of those in the farm communities who would like to hire them. This is the application. There are hundreds of pages a farmer has to comply with to hire one worker. Conversely, I applied for a job in the Sen-

ate, I had to fill out a two-page document. This is what a farmer has to fill out just to get a worker in a system that is untimely as the crops go unharvested.

We have a broken system. I believe it is estimated about 30,000 in total in this country use this system out of probably 2 million illegal aliens in agriculture. I think it is a given, a manifest failure. We need to make our guest worker law workable. That is a long-term solution. I think we need to do this.

What made my meetings, frankly, more productive and very helpful was a press release from the AFL-CIO, in which they called not for help to farmers and farm workers alone, they called for a general amnesty of all illegal aliens in this country. A general amnesty is something we have done in this country periodically; every few decades we seem to do this. The question now is whether it is appropriate to do that now.

There have been lots of editorial comments about this recently in the Washington Post. There was a very interesting article on this whole issue of farm labor and illegality. The Post said:

Congress has responded sympathetically to the pleas of the high-tech industry to hire more skilled workers from abroad, but it has yet to do anything for employers of those at the bottom end of the labor market—the end where U.S. citizens don't want to work. Now, with a record number of illegal immigrants living in the United States, an estimated 6 million, with most of them working, some even paying taxes and joining unions, it is time to bring our immigration policies in line with what is actually happening in the labor market. It is time to recognize that we need the immigrants as much as they need us.

See, I know in Congress there are a lot of people who make an academic argument that we don't want to reward illegal behavior with a legal document. I understand that, but it doesn't fix the problem. It doesn't deal with reality. These people aren't coming; they are here and they live among us. They live in our shadows and they are victimized on a daily basis in a whole range of ways—bureaucratically, even criminally. It is a shame upon this country that we don't resolve this—short-term and long-term.

I was pleased that in the recent testimony of Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan he gave support to what I am talking about. Said the Chairman:

It is clear that under existing circumstances, not only in the high-tech and in the farm area, but indeed throughout the country, aggregate demand is putting very significant pressures on an ever-decreasing available supply of unemployed labor. The one obvious means that one can use to offset that is expanding the number of people we allow in, either generally or in specifically focused areas. And I do not think that an appraisal of our immigration policies in this regard is really clearly on the table.

I think we need to put it clearly on the table as a priority of this Congress

to do something about it. It need not be partisan. Regarding the position the AFL-CIO has just taken, I hope they will let me help them. I would like to help them to get a general amnesty. But I think that we also need to fix our broken farm labor system.

For those who say we should not do anything, I don't know what their motive is. I fear too often, though, that it is just anti-immigrant. We rightfully criticize, for example, Joerg Haider, of Austria for his anti-immigrant statement, which recalls a bygone era and a great tragedy. But what is the difference when we have politicians among us who make comments not unlike that about even legal immigration? They don't want anymore of it.

We have the Chairman of the Federal Reserve saying we need workers because we have good employment, but it is predicated on an illegal system. We need these jobs to be filled and we need crops harvested. Right now, we are victimizing farm workers and farmers because farm workers have to live like fugitives among us, and farmers are made out to be felons. We owe the United States something better. But, more, we owe the people at the bottom rung something better. They contribute to our society and they are victimized too often by our society when they make a significant contribution to the abundance that we enjoy as Americans.

So I call on our congressional leadership to bring us together, to fix our H-2A program, but also to pursue the amnesty that has been suggested by the AFL-CIO in this two-pronged approach. We can find a solution and we can treat these people more fairly, like human beings, with the dignity of law and the protection of law and a process that is safe and humane.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, let me inquire of the parliamentary situation. Are we in a period of morning business?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. We are until 12:30.

DEFENSE HEALTH CARE BILL

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I rise in support this morning of S. 2087, the Military Health Care Improvement Act of 2000. This is bipartisan legislation. It will begin to fulfill a promise of lifetime health care for our military men and women who sacrifice so much for our freedom.

This bill begins a multiyear process to identify and correct the broken promise of lifetime health care to our